

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' RESPONSES TOWARD THE USE OF ELSA SPEAK APPLICATION IN PRACTICING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS BASED ON CEFR DESCRIPTORS

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Abstract

Speaking is a crucial skill in English language learning. In the Society 5.0 era, some students still struggle with vocabulary pronunciation, which diminishes their confidence particularly when giving presentations in class. While various technology based learning tools and mobile applications offering unique speaking practice features have been developed, their actual utilization remains limited. This study aims to analyze student responses to using the ELSA Speak application to improve their English speaking skills. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with method content, the study involved 28 tenth grade students from SMK Kesehatan Bhakti Kencana Subang, with six students selected for interviews via purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, supplemented by pre-test and post-test results on speaking skills based on CEFR descriptors. The findings indicate that students responded positively to the ELSA Speak application, as it helped enhance their vocabulary and speaking fluency while boosting their confidence. Furthermore, the application's feedback feature enabled students to independently correct pronunciation errors. These findings demonstrate that ELSA Speak is an effective learning tool for supporting English speaking practice and increasing student engagement in the learning process.

Keywords: *Students' Responses, Elsa Speak, English Speaking Skill, CEFR Descriptors.*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of Society 5.0, rapid technological advancements such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) have brought about significant changes across various sectors, particularly in education. The use of digital technology offers great convenience in the learning process; for instance, AI-based applications enable students to learn independently and enjoy flexible schedules by allowing them to manage their own study time. Nevertheless, many students still struggle with speaking English, partly because the language involves vocabulary and sentence structures that can convey varying meanings. Therefore, despite the technological progress associated with Society 5.0, learning English remains a challenge for many students.

In various countries, including Indonesia, English is a compulsory school subject due to its vital role in education and global communication. With the advancement of technology, an increasing number of students are utilizing AI based applications to assist their learning, both inside and outside the classroom. Nevertheless, students' speaking proficiency is often still considered lacking in fluency particularly regarding the correct pronunciation of English vocabulary and sentences especially when delivering presentations in class.

Speaking is one of the productive skills possessed by humans and is considered crucial in English language learning, as it enables students to convey ideas, express their opinions, and interact in real-life situations around us. According to Maulida (2021), speaking is an activity that integrates various student abilities, including language proficiency, sentence construction, and the capacity to link ideas with the intent or ability to communicate them. This demonstrates that speaking skills are not merely about correct pronunciation; they must also encompass the ability to develop communication strategies that ensure our messages are clearly conveyed to others during interaction.

English language proficiency encompasses four key skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. However, speaking plays a crucial role in today's global communication, serving as the primary means of interacting with people around the world. Language proficiency is typically measured against an international standard known as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is divided into six levels: Basic (A1–A2), Intermediate (B1–B2), and Proficient (C1–C2). This aligns with Nunan (1991: 35), who posits that speaking proficiency in second-language learning focuses on the ability to communicate comfortably and fluently in everyday situations, thereby effectively engaging one's interlocutor or audience. According to the Europe (2020) learners at this stage are capable of using simple expressions and communicating in routine situations involving familiar topics through the exchange of basic information. However, despite having been tested at this CEFR level, many students still face difficulties particularly regarding accurate vocabulary pronunciation, English speaking fluency, and confidence during oral communication. These findings indicate that the students' speaking proficiency remains at a basic level, necessitating more effective teaching methods to help them progress rapidly to higher levels. Understanding CEFR proficiency levels also enables teachers to design instruction tailored to the specific needs and abilities of each student.

One application that can help students improve their speaking skills is ELSA Speak. It offers a diverse learning experience through various specialized features and available resources such as an in app translation tool. The app was founded and created in San Francisco in 2015 by Vu Dinh Hong Vu (known as Vuvan) and his partner, Xavier Anguera. ELSA Speak leverages artificial intelligence and speech recognition technology to help users improve their English pronunciation. Through ELSA Speak, users can access various exercises and receive immediate feedback on pronunciation, word stress, and intonation

while practicing speaking within the app. It is widely used by language learners around the world to hone their speaking skills. Beyond improving English pronunciation, ELSA Speak also helps build confidence and enhance speaking fluency.

Various previous studies indicate that ELSA Speak is an effective application for improving students' pronunciation skills. The app provides personalized feedback and offers exercises focusing on vowel and consonant sounds, word stress, and intonation. These features enable students to practice independently according to their specific needs. Kholis (2021) reported that students experienced significant improvements in pronunciation after using ELSA Speak, as the app provides immediate corrective feedback and opportunities for repetitive pronunciation practice. In addition, ELSA Speak has been proven to boost students' confidence in speaking English through clear, real-time feedback provided within the app.

The success of integrating technology into learning is determined not only by the sophistication of the applications used but also by how students respond to them. Student response serves as a crucial indicator for gauging the extent to which an application is perceived as useful and user-friendly. According to Davis (1989), users are inclined to adopt and sustain the use of a technology if they perceive it as beneficial for enhancing performance and easy to operate. In the context of education, student response is reflected in increased learning motivation, active participation in lessons, and a willingness to engage in learning activities. Therefore, students' perceptions regarding the benefits and ease of use of the ELSA Speak application serve as a crucial indicator for assessing the app's effectiveness in helping students practice their English speaking skills while enhancing their learning experience.

Although previous studies have demonstrated that the ELSA Speak app can improve students' pronunciation and speaking skills, most of this research has focused on measuring learning outcomes or pronunciation improvements. Research examining student responses to the use of ELSA Speak particularly among 10th-grade students in Indonesian vocational high schools (SMK) remains very limited. Furthermore, few studies have combined student responses with supporting evidence regarding their speaking abilities before and after using the app. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by identifying and exploring student responses to using ELSA Speak for practicing English speaking skills, while also describing the students' speaking abilities before and after using the application.

Based on that objective, this study aims to answer the following research question.

1. How is the English speaking ability of tenth-grade vocational high school students before and after the use of the ELSA Speak application?
2. How do students respond to the use of the ELSA Speak application in learning English speaking skills?

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach to examine and understand students' reactions to the implementation of the ELSA Speak app in learning the English language. Qualitative research design is a method that emphasizes comprehending social phenomena or experiences we encounter directly. In line with Sandelowski (2000) perspective, qualitative descriptive research aims to present a comprehensive summary of events or experiences involving everyday language use, while remaining closely grounded in the participants' perspectives. This design was chosen because it aligns with the research questions, which focus on gaining an in depth understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and reactions when using the ELSA Speak app both in the classroom and at

home to measure speaking proficiency through numerical data. The qualitative descriptive approach allows the researcher to describe a phenomenon in its natural setting without manipulating the situation, so that students' responses can be observed and described through real-life learning situations. Alternative designs, such as an experimental design, were not chosen because this study does not aim to test causal relationships between variables. A survey approach was also not used because it was deemed incapable of capturing the depth of students' experiences within their specific contexts. Quantitative methods were thought about but not actually used because this study is all about understanding meaning, not about working with numbers or data that is presented in a numerical form. Data analysis was done through Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). Qualitative content analysis is a way of studying meaning in a field by looking at text or spoken words. The researcher finds themes or patterns in things like interviews, written documents, or video recordings. Qualitative content analysis is a research method for interpreting meaning in the field from textual or spoken data, in which the researcher identifies themes or patterns in interviews, documents, or videos. This aligns with the perspective of Schreier (2012), who states that qualitative content analysis is a systematic method for describing the meaning of qualitative data by grouping data segments into categories within a coding framework. In this study, students' responses were grouped into categories such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary mastery, motivation, and self-confidence to facilitate a systematic and meaningful interpretation of the findings.

Participants

This study involved approximately 28 tenth-grade students from SMK Kesehatan Bhakti Kencana Subang enrolled in the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants consisted of 4 male and 24 female students, all of whom underwent classroom observation as well as CEFR based speaking pre-tests and post-tests during instruction utilizing the ELSA Speak application. Based on the CEFR based pre-test results, 10 students were categorized at level A1, 9 at level A2, 4 at level B1, 2 at level B2, and 1 at level C1. These results indicate that, overall, the participants possessed English speaking abilities ranging from beginner to upper intermediate levels at the start of the study. To obtain more in depth qualitative data, six students were selected via purposive sampling from the 28 participants to undergo semi-structured interviews. These participants were chosen because they represented a range of speaking proficiency levels and learning experiences with the ELSA Speak application, thereby enabling the researcher to gather diverse and information rich perspectives. Although only selected interview excerpts are presented in the findings section, the complete transcripts from all six participants were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. According to Schreier (2012), participants in qualitative research are selected based on their ability to provide meaningful, data-rich information, rather than to represent the population statistically.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

This study uses classroom observation, interviews with open-ended questions, and speaking tests (before and after) to collect data. Classroom observation was done to check how students were involved, how much they paid attention, how they interacted with each other and the teacher, and how they responded during English lessons that used ELSA Speak. The ELSA Speak application was used to conduct interviews with students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, opinions, and perceptions. Meanwhile, the pre-test and post-test were used to gather information about students' speaking skills before and after they used the application. According to Creswell (2012), observation is a qualitative data collection method in which the researcher systematically observes participants' behavior and activities in their natural setting to obtain firsthand information regarding the

phenomenon under study. Similarly, Ferdila (2014) utilized classroom observation to monitor students' learning activities during the instructional process and to gather direct information on student participation, interaction, and responses. Therefore, classroom observation was selected for this study as it enables the researcher to obtain authentic data regarding student responses during the implementation of the ELSA Speak application in the classroom. Classroom observations focused on four stages of the learning process: homework, exploration, elaboration, and confirmation. The observation instrument consisted of a checklist containing indicators related to students' attention, participation, engagement, and responses during the lesson. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather comprehensive information regarding students' experiences, opinions, and perceptions concerning the use of the ELSA Speak application, thereby complementing the findings obtained from classroom observations. Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush (2006) define an interview as a conversation aimed at gathering information, wherein the researcher asks questions and the respondent provides answers. In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed to ensure the researcher remained focused on the research objectives while allowing students the freedom to elaborate on their experiences using the ELSA Speak application. The instrument used was an interview guide containing pre-prepared questions. In addition, pre-test and post-test were used to evaluate students' speaking abilities before and after using the ELSA Speak application.

According to the Europe (2020) learners at the A2 level are capable of producing simple utterances regarding familiar topics, despite occasional pauses and pronunciation errors. Therefore, this study focuses on observing developments in vocabulary and pronunciation, which are essential foundational skills for beginner level learners. The test topics matched the descriptive text curriculum and covered the same subjects as ELSA Speak, which include hobbies and interests, personality adjectives, and places in a city. All student speaking performances were recorded with a voice recorder to make sure the data is accurate and to help with the analysis process. The results from the pre-test and post-test were not analyzed using statistical methods; instead, they were described in a descriptive way to act as supporting information that helps back up the findings from the observations and interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out in several stages over a period of approximately three weeks. Prior to the study, the researcher coordinated with the school and the English teacher to obtain permission and plan the research procedures. At the beginning of the study, a CEFR based speaking pre-test was administered to 28 tenth-grade students to assess their initial English speaking proficiency. The pre-test results were not statistically analyzed but served as supporting data to complement the qualitative research findings. Subsequently, learning activities using the ELSA Speak application were conducted over a one-week period. During this time, students practiced speaking independently at home every day, and their learning progress was monitored by the researcher through activity reports consisting of profile screenshots uploaded to a Google Drive link covering the period from the first to the seventh day. Concurrently, the researcher conducted classroom observations to examine students' participation, engagement, motivation, and responses regarding the use of the ELSA Speak application. Observation results were documented using structured observation sheets and detailed field notes. The researcher served as the sole observer, as the study was conducted as an undergraduate thesis project with limited human resources. To mitigate potential observer bias, observation findings were triangulated with data obtained from a CEFR based pre-test, a post-test, and semi-structured interviews. Nevertheless, the use of a single observer may limit the objectivity of the observation data,

and this is acknowledged as a limitation of the study. Following the learning activities, the same students took a CEFR-based speaking post-test to assess changes in their English speaking proficiency after using the ELSA Speak application. During the third and final week, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six students selected via purposive sampling. Participants were chosen to represent various levels of speaking proficiency and learning experiences with the ELSA Speak application. The interviews aimed to explore the students' experiences, perceptions, and responses regarding the use of the application to improve their English speaking skills. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy prior to analysis using qualitative content analysis.

Data Analysis Methods

The data in this study were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis method adapted by the researcher from Schreier (2012). This study applied the general procedures of qualitative content analysis outlined by Schreier (2012), which provide a systematic framework for analyzing qualitative data. This method was selected because the study aimed to explore students' responses to using the ELSA Speak application for practicing English speaking skills, thereby requiring an approach capable of systematically interpreting participants' experiences and perceptions. Through qualitative content analysis, the researcher could identify patterns of meaning emerging from the data while preserving the context of each participant's response. The primary data source consisted of semi-structured interviews, while classroom observations and speaking proficiency assessments (pre-tests and post-tests) served as supporting data to strengthen the findings through triangulation. Interpretations and the frequency of occurrence for each category were calculated and presented as percentages to highlight the most dominant response patterns. The analysis process followed steps adapted from Schreier (2012): data familiarization, category development, coding, and data interpretation.

Subsequently, relevant statements were grouped into categories reflecting the research focus, including improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, confidence, and learning motivation, as well as students' perceptions regarding the use of the ELSA Speak application. The entire data management and analysis process was conducted manually using Microsoft Word. These findings are supported by Creswell (2012) definition of qualitative data analysis as a process involving data preparation and organization, reading the data, coding information into categories and themes, and interpreting the meaning of the findings. Thus, the researcher employed a method adapted from Schreier, with supporting validation provided by Creswell (2012).

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of educational research to protect the rights and well being of all participants. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the Deputy Principal for Curriculum Affairs at SMK Kesehatan Bhakti Kencana Subang and the English language teacher. All participants were informed about the research objectives, procedures, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Furthermore, those unable to attend provided they had a valid reason would face no consequences whatsoever. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, students' identities have been anonymized using initials or participant codes (e.g., P1–P6) throughout the interview transcripts and the research report. All interview recordings, observation notes, and speaking test data are securely stored and used solely for academic research purposes. To enhance the credibility and validity of the research findings, the researcher employed data triangulation by comparing information obtained from classroom observations, CEFR-based speaking pre-tests and post-tests, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher also maintained objectivity

throughout the data collection and analysis processes by adhering to the qualitative content analysis procedures outlined by Schreier (2012). These ethical procedures were implemented to ensure respect for participants' rights, uphold research integrity, and increase the trustworthiness of the research results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

The results of this study are shared using data gathered from four tools: classroom observations, pre-tests and post-tests based on the CEFR, and interviews. These four tools were used to get a full understanding of how students felt about using the ELSA Speak app to practice their English speaking abilities. Although this study uses a qualitative method, the results from the CEFR based pre-test and post-test are shown as. Supporting data that shows how good the students were at speaking before they used the ELSA Speak app and how much better they became after using it. This data wasn't used to do a statistical test on how well the intervention worked, but it was used to support the results from the classroom observations and interviews. The research findings are given in the following sections:

Classroom Observations Findings

Classroom observations were conducted over approximately three weeks during the implementation of the ELSA Speak application in speaking skills instruction at SMK Kesehatan Bhakti Kencana Subang. These observations involved 28 tenth grade students and aimed to provide an overview of students' responses and participation throughout the learning process. According to Creswell (2012), classroom observation is a data collection technique that enables researchers to systematically observe participants' behaviors, interactions, and activities in their natural setting. In this study, the observation focused on four stages of learning: homework, exploration, elaboration, and confirmation. The observation data were documented using an observation checklist developed by the researcher and were subsequently analyzed using qualitative content analysis following Schreier (2012). A summary of the observation results is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Summary of Classroom Observation Findings

No.	Learning Stage	Oservation Focus	Summary of findings	Interpretation
1.	Homework	Independent speaking Practice	Some students did the pronunciation practice tasks on their own using the ELSA Speak app.	They showed responsibility and were able to learn on their own.
2.	Exploration	Class Discussion	Students use the ELSA Speak app to practice their pronunciation, then they talk about their experiences and share feedback with each other.	Students demonstrate positive behavioral and emotional engagement.
3.	Elaboration	Speaking Presentation	About four or five students signed up to give brief presentations and showed more confidence.	The students showed more confidence and were more ready to speak in English.
4.	Confirmation	Learning Ojectives	Some students could see the advantages of using the ELSA Speak app and answered the questions effectively.	The students knew what they were supposed to learn and liked using the ELSA Speak app.

The table above shows that classroom observations revealed a variety of student responses, with the majority reacting positively to the implementation of the ELSA Speak app during the learning process. Regarding homework, most students consistently completed the assigned speaking exercises independently outside of class. These findings indicate that the app encourages students to take greater responsibility for their own learning and supports independent speaking practice beyond classroom activities. During the exploration stage, students actively participated in class discussions by sharing their experiences using ELSA Speak. Many students explained that the app's instant feedback feature allowed them to identify and correct pronunciation errors independently; they also learned through the "Learn" feature, which covers three themes: "Home and Interests," "Places in a City," and "Personality Adjectives." Student enthusiasm and active engagement in discussions reflected a positive attitude toward the learning activities, although some students commented on the limited features and the premium content that was inaccessible due to the app's paid nature. In the elaboration stage, several students volunteered to give short presentations after practicing with the app. Despite some remaining pronunciation and grammatical errors, the students were able to communicate their ideas using simple English expressions with a higher level of confidence than at the beginning of the learning process. These observations indicate that regular practice with ELSA Speak helped boost students' confidence in speaking English. During the confirmation stage, most students demonstrated an understanding of the lesson material by accurately answering the researcher's questions and explaining the benefits of using ELSA Speak. Their responses showed that they viewed the app as a useful learning tool for improving pronunciation and supporting their speaking practice. Overall, the observational findings indicate that the implementation of ELSA Speak created a positive learning environment by encouraging active student participation in both classroom activities and independent speaking practice. The increased participation, confidence, and engagement observed during the learning process demonstrate that the app contributed positively to the students' experience in learning to speak English. These findings align with research conducted by Maulida et al., (2023) which reports that integrating technology into English language learning can enhance student motivation and engagement, thereby resulting in a more positive learning experience.

Speaking Pre-Test Findings

Before using the ELSA Speak app, a speaking test was done to find out how good the students were at speaking and to get starting information before the learning started. The assessment looked at students' speaking skills in several areas like pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and how smoothly they speak. The results were understood using descriptions of language ability from different sources, including Europe (2020), Brown (2004), Richards (2008), Bachman and Palmer (1996), and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which was created by the Council of Europe in 2001. After that, students' language skills were grouped into CEFR levels, which go from A1 up to C1 and C2. The results from the first tests are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of Students' Speaking Pre-test Results Based on CEFR

CEFR Level	Number Of Students	Percentage	General Characteristics
A1	10	35.7%	Students could say words they knew well, but they found it hard to make full sentences and talk about their thoughts smoothly.
B1	4	14.3%	Students spoke more confidently and used longer sentences, but they still made mistakes with pronunciation and grammar.

B2	2	7.1 %	The students showed pretty good fluency, a wider range of vocabulary, and better way of organizing their ideas.
C1-C2	1	3.6%	Students gave clear answers that were more grammatically correct, used a wider variety of words, and spoke more smoothly.
Total	28	100%	

Table 2 shows that most students were placed at basic skill levels before using ELSA Speak. 35.7% of the students, which is 10 students, were placed at CEFR Level A1, and 32.1% of the students, which is 9 students, were at Level A2. These students could usually say words they knew and make simple sentences, but they had trouble making correct grammar, using different words, and staying fluent when talking. At the same time, four students (14.3%) got to Level B1, and two students (7.1%) made it to Level B2. Students in these groups showed more confidence and could explain their thoughts better, but sometimes they still made mistakes with how they spoke or used grammar. Only one student, which is 3.6%, achieved the advanced proficiency level (C1–C2). This student was able to give clear and organized spoken responses, used a broader range of vocabulary, and spoke more smoothly and fluently. Overall, the results show that 67.8% of the people were still considered basic users (A1–A2) before they started using ELSA Speak. These results show that most students needed more help with pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar accuracy, and speaking fluency. The results from the pre-test were used as a starting point to measure how much students' speaking skills improved after using the ELSA Speak app. To show the speaking skills of students at each skill level, examples of their answers are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Sample Responses of Students' Speaking Pre-test Results Based on CEFR

CEFR Level	Sample Response	Interpretation
A1	<i>"I go to the library. She is a polite teacher."</i>	The student made simple sentences but had trouble with clear pronunciation and building proper sentences.
A2	<i>"I want to talk about Alun-Alun Subang. It is in the center of the city. I usually go there with my family."</i>	The student was able to talk about a topic they knew well using short sentences, even though they made some grammar and word choice mistakes.
B1	<i>"I like Alun-Alun Subang because it is big and clean. I usually spend my weekend there with my friends."</i>	The student expressed ideas in a clearer and more confident way by using sentences that connect well, but there were still a few small language mistakes.
C1-C2	<i>"Although both a library and a park provide valuable places for relaxation, I prefer the library because it offers a quiet environment for studying and developing knowledge, whereas a park is more suitable for recreational activities."</i>	The student shared clear and well-organized thoughts, used the right words, made few grammar mistakes, and spoke smoothly, which shows they have a high level of language skill.

The answers given by the representatives in Table 3 show how students' speaking skills improve as they move through the different CEFR levels. As their skill level grew, students showed better grammar, used more varied words, spoke more smoothly, and organized their thoughts in a clearer and more logical way. These examples back up the CEFR levels shown in Table 2 and show real examples of how students' speaking skills were different before they started using ELSA Speak.

Speaking Post-Test Findings

After using the ELSA Speak app, a final test was given to check how well the students could speak, to see if their speaking skills improved after the learning activity. Like the first test, students' speaking skills were checked based on how they pronounced words, used vocabulary, followed grammar rules, and spoke smoothly. The results were understood using the CEFR standards for language levels, along with references from Europe (2020), Brown (2004), Richards (2008), Bachman and Palmer (1996), and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which was created by the Council of Europe in 2001. The results from the last test were grouped into CEFR skill levels, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Classification of Students' Speaking Post-test Results Based on CEFR

CEFR Level	Number Of Students	Percentage	General Characteristics
A2	12	42.9%	Students could share simple ideas by using more complete sentences, and their pronunciation and speaking smoothly improved, even though there were some small grammar mistakes errors remained.
B1	11	39.3 %	Students spoke with more confidence, gave longer answers, and used better words and grammar accuracy.
B2	2	7.1%	Students showed good fluency, used a wider range of vocabulary, and were better at organizing their thoughts clearly.
C1-C2	1	3.6 %	The student gave clear and organized answers with mostly
			correct grammar, used a good variety of words, and spoke smoothly.
Total	28	100%	

Table 4 shows that students' speaking skills have improved a lot after using the ELSA Speak app. Unlike the pre-test, no students stayed at CEFR Level A1. Most students reached Level A2 (42.9%), and the next highest group was Level B1 (39.3%). These results show that most students moved from practicing basic pronunciation to giving more meaningful spoken answers with more confidence. Additionally, two students (7.1%) reached Level B2, and one student (3.6%) achieved the advanced proficiency level (C1–C2). Students at these levels showed more fluency, a wider range of words, better grammar, and more clear and organized thinking in their speaking and writing. Overall, the results after the test show that students made clear progress in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and how smoothly they speak after taking part in speaking exercises with the ELSA Speak app. To support the CEFR classification with quality examples, some students' speaking responses are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Sample Responses of Students' Speaking Pre-test Results Based on CEFR

CEFR Level	Sample Response	Interpretation
A2	<i>"I like Alun-Alun Subang because it is in the city center. It is big and fun. I can relax there with my family."</i>	The student was able to express simple ideas clearly by using more complete sentences, and their pronunciation and fluency have improved, although there were still some issues grammatical errors remained.
B1	<i>"Monas is a famous place in Jakarta. It is located in the city center. Many people visit it to learn about history and enjoy the beautiful view. My friend is kind, friendly, and enjoys reading and drawing."</i>	The student explained their ideas in a clear way using sentences that are connected, showing improved fluency, vocabulary, and confidence despite minor grammatical inaccuracies.
B2	<i>"I think hobbies are very important because they help people improve their skills and reduce stress. I often read books in the library because it is quiet, comfortable, and provides a good environment for studying."</i>	The student showed more fluency, used a wider range of words, and organized their ideas better when sharing their opinions.
C1-C2	<i>"Although both a library and a park have their own advantages, I prefer the library because it provides a quiet atmosphere for studying and self-development, whereas a park is more suitable for relaxation and outdoor activities."</i>	The student showed strong speaking skills by organizing ideas clearly, using the right words, making few grammar mistakes, and speaking smoothly.

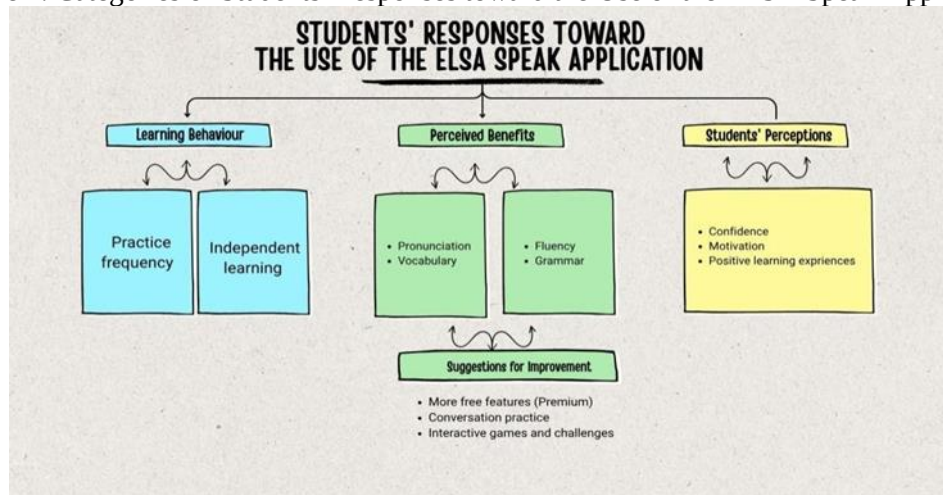
The answers given by the representatives in Table 5 show how students' ability to speak improved after using the ELSA Speak app. When compared to their answers before the test, students gave responses with better pronunciation, more varied vocabulary, more correct grammar, and more clear and connected speech. The results from the qualitative study back up the quantitative CEFR classification shown in Table 4, showing that students' speaking skills got better after the teaching program was put into place.

Interview Findings

The interview data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis adapted from Schreier (2012). First, all interview transcripts were read repeatedly to familiarize the researcher with the data.

Relevant meaning units related to students' responses toward the implementation of the ELSA Speak application were identified and assigned initial codes. Similar codes were then grouped into subcategories based on conceptual similarities and organized into broader analytical categories representing students' overall responses to the use of the application. The coding process resulted in four main categories: Learning Behaviour, Perceived Benefits, Students' Perceptions, and Suggestions for Improvement. The analytical categories generated through the qualitative content analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Categories of Students' Responses toward the Use of the ELSA Speak Application



As shown in Figure 1, the results from the interviews were grouped into four main themes that came from the coding process. These themes show what students said about using the ELSA Speak app and help explain the interview answers. A summary of the coding categories along with the interview questions related to each is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Interview Coding Categories

Theme	Interview Questions	Focus on analysis
Learning Behaviour	Q1	Students' learning habits, frequency of practice, and independent learning using the ELSA Speak application.
Perceived Benefits	Q2–Q3	Students' perceptions of the application's contribution to improving pronunciation and vocabulary.
Students' Perceptions	Q4–Q6, Q8	Students' confidence, motivation, overall learning experiences, and willingness to recommend the application.
Suggestion for Improvement	Q7	Students' suggestions for improving the features and learning experience provided by the ELSA Speak application.

The interview data were studied using a type of qualitative content analysis based on the methods from Schreier (2012). Once the coding was done, the eight interview questions were sorted into four main themes according to their similar ideas. Instead of sharing each interview answer on its own, the results are grouped into bigger themes that show what students generally think about using the ELSA Speak app. The coding summary is shown in Table 5.

Learning Behaviour

The interview results show that students often use the ELSA Speak app to practice speaking English outside of their regular class time. However, how often people practice differs from one person to another. Some students practice about twice a week, while others practice three or four times a week, and a small number say they practice almost every day. Even though there are some differences, every participant shows they can learn on their own by practicing English by themselves after school or at home. These results show that the ELSA Speak app helps students build a habit of regularly practicing speaking outside of their classroom time.

One participant stated,
"I practice English pronunciation with the ELSA Speak app almost every day after school." (P4)

Similarly, another participant explained,
"I usually practice English pronunciation with Elsa Speak two times a week at home." (P6)

Perceived Benefits

Most people thought that using the ELSA Speak app helped them get better at speaking English. Students said that the app's pronunciation feedback helped them find their pronunciation mistakes quickly and fix them on their own. Participants said that ELSA Speak helped them learn new words and phrases by covering different topics, which allowed them to improve their vocabulary and speaking skills at the same time.

One participant commented,
"The pronunciation feedback feature is the most effective because it shows my mistakes clearly and helps me correct my pronunciation immediately." (P3)

Another participant stated,
"Elsa teaches many new words from daily life, business, and travel topics. I learn new vocabulary and how to use the words in sentences." (P5)

Students' Perceptions

Interview data also show that students felt more confident and were more motivated after using the ELSA Speak app. Participants said that better pronunciation helped them feel less nervous and more ready to speak in English. Moreover, students liked the app because it was easy to use, fun, and engaging, which made them want to speak English more often.

One participant explained,
"Before using Elsa I was shy to speak English. Now I feel more confident because my pronunciation is getting better." (P5)

Another participant stated,
"I feel very motivated because I can see my progress and score improving. It makes me want to practice more." (P5)

Suggestions for Improvement

Despite the app being praised by students, they also provided feedback to improve the learning experience. The usual suggestions were to offer more free features, give more chances to practice talking, add fun games, and include speaking challenges. These recommendations show that students want ELSA Speak to provide more free, easy-to-use learning activities so they can keep practicing their speaking skills.

One participant suggested,
"I suggest adding more speaking topics, conversation exercises, and more free options to make the learning experience more engaging." (P2)

Another participant stated,
"I hope Elsa Speak can provide more interactive games and speaking challenges." (P6)

Overall, the interviews show that students liked using the ELSA Speak app to improve their English speaking skills. The analysis of qualitative data showed that the app helped students build better study habits on their own and made improvements in their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and how smoothly they speak. The app also helped them feel more confident and encouraged them to speak in English. Despite some students recommending the inclusion of free features and more interactive speaking exercises, the results indicate that ELSA Speak is a highly effective tool for improving student speaking abilities. These results match what was seen in the classroom and the progress shown in the tests before and after. They also support Brown (2004) view that regular speaking practice

with immediate feedback can enhance learners' speaking abilities, and are consistent with the views of Kukulska Hulme and Shield (2008), who state that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) fosters autonomous language learning.

B. Discussion

This study demonstrates that the use of the ELSA Speak application positively influences students' English speaking learning experiences. Classroom observations revealed increased student participation, engagement, and confidence during speaking activities, while CEFR based speaking assessments showed improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and overall speaking proficiency. These findings indicate that the combination of regular speaking practice and AI driven pronunciation feedback enables students to independently identify and correct pronunciation errors, thereby facilitating more effective speaking practice both inside and outside the classroom. The improvement in students' speaking skills is highly significant, as it demonstrates that AI based language learning applications like ELSA Speak can support the development of communicative competence among vocational high school students. The absence of students at the A1 level in the post-test results, combined with the increased number of students reaching levels A2, B1, B2, and C1–C2, indicates meaningful progress in the students' speaking abilities. According to the Europe (2020), an increase in CEFR levels reflects learners' growing ability to communicate with greater accuracy, fluency, and confidence in real-life communication situations. The findings of this study align with Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that the learning process is facilitated through the use of learning tools and appropriate support. In this study, ELSA Speak serves as a technology-based learning medium that enables students to practice independently while receiving immediate corrective feedback. The results also support Brown (2004) view that speaking proficiency develops through continuous practice accompanied by constructive feedback, as well as Harmer (2007) perspective that regular speaking practice can boost students' confidence in communicating in English. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with the research of Aminah and Maulida (2020), who reported that consistent, independent speaking practice contributes to improved English speaking skills. The study also demonstrates that the use of ELSA Speak fosters greater student motivation to practice speaking independently outside of classroom instruction. From a practical standpoint, these findings indicate that English teachers can integrate AI based applications such as ELSA Speak as supplementary learning tools to provide more opportunities for speaking practice outside the classroom. However, such applications should serve as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, teacher guidance and communicative interaction within the classroom. While the pronunciation feedback provided by the app can support pronunciation practice, classroom learning activities remain essential for developing interactive communication skills. Although this study yielded positive results, there are several limitations that should be noted. The study involved only 28 students from a single vocational high school (SMK), thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Furthermore, classroom observations were conducted by a single observer, creating a potential for observational bias, despite the use of data triangulation involving observations, CEFR based speaking assessments, and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the relatively short duration of the implementation may not fully capture the long term impact of using ELSA Speak on students' speaking skill development. Consequently, these limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings; they also present opportunities for future research to involve larger participant groups, utilize multiple observers, extend the intervention period, and encompass diverse educational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study explores students' responses to the use of the ELSA Speak application for practicing English speaking skills. Data were collected through classroom observations, CEFR based speaking pre-tests and post-tests, and semi-structured interviews. The results indicate that students responded positively to the implementation of the ELSA Speak application. Classroom observations revealed improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and overall speaking ability following the learning process. Interview findings also showed that students became more confident and motivated to practice speaking English. They considered the "Learn" feature particularly the immediate feedback provided by the ELSA Speak application to be highly beneficial in enhancing their speaking skills. These findings indicate that ELSA Speak can serve as an effective supplementary learning tool for practicing English speaking skills, as it offers flexible learning opportunities and immediate pronunciation feedback. Therefore, English teachers and educators are encouraged to integrate AI-powered applications like ELSA Speak into classroom activities and independent student practice to enhance speaking opportunities, self-confidence, and learning motivation. However, the use of such technology based applications should serve to complement rather than replace communicative classroom interaction and teacher guidance. This study involved 28 Grade X students from a single vocational high school SMK Kesehatan Bhakti Kencana Subang with six students participating in interviews. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted by a single researcher, which potentially limits the objectivity of the observational data, despite the use of data triangulation. Therefore, future research should involve a larger and more diverse group of participants from various educational contexts, employ multiple observers to enhance the validity of observational data, extend the duration of the instructional implementation, and consider using mixed-methods or experimental designs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of AI-based language learning applications in improving English speaking skills.

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